

Towards a (Gender) Equality Department at the MoI

by Marie-Christine Heinze

SUMMARY

Most cases of gender-based violence (GBV) in Yemen go unreported as these usually occur within the family and as the security of women and girls is generally considered a family affair.

They also and more significantly go unreported because women and girls have no one to turn to outside their family if they want to escape continued abuse.

In order to be able to cater to the special security concerns of women and girls the Yemeni police thus has to increase the number of police-women in general and the number of policewomen in higher ranks.

The police forces also have to receive better and more comprehensive training on GBV and they have to establish lasting links to shelter homes as well as civil society. In order to consistently implement these requirements, the MoI should establish a (Gender) Equality Department in the office of the Inspector General, a suggested structure for which is outlined in this brief.

This YPC policy brief is the result of a wider YPC policy report to be published in June 2013 on *Integrating Women's Security Interests into Police Reform in Yemen*, co-authored by Sarah Ahmed and the author of this policy brief. The report finds that the security of women and girls in Yemen is generally considered a family affair, which results in the fact that most cases of gender-based violence go unreported as these usually occur within the family.

They also and more significantly go unreported because women and girls have no one to turn to outside their family if they want to escape continued abuse. The authors thus argue that in order for the Yemeni police to be able to cater to the special security interests of women and girls:

- more women need to be recruited into the police forces;
- more women are needed in higher ranks in the police forces;
- the police forces need to receive better and more comprehensive training on gender-based violence;
- the MoI and the police forces need to receive reports and inputs on the special security interests of women and girls in Yemen, on specific problems that may arise from social and/or political developments, and on positive or negative results of the MoI's reform efforts;
- safe houses and shelter homes for women ought to be coordinated and supervised by the MoI;

- the detention conditions of female prisoners need to be supervised by the MoI; civil society activists, journalists, and others concerned with the special security interests of
- women and girls as well as with women's issues in security and crime need to have a point of contact in the MoI to receive information, to be able to raise their concerns, and to make suggestions for improvement.

For these points to become a reality, a special department needs to be established in the MoI. We suggest it be called (Gender) Equality Department (GED) and that it becomes part of the planned Inspector General's Department at the MoI. All suggestions in this policy report are designed as a basis for discussion and are thus open to further input and revision. Next to the tasks outlined below, the title of the department itself should be subject to debate as not everyone in Yemen is comfortable with the term 'gender'. Alternatively, it might simply be termed 'Department for Equality' or 'Department for Equality in Security Provision'.

In general, the GED should be responsible for gender mainstreaming security provision in Yemen. This relates as much to those who provide security in the country, i.e. law enforcement etc., as well as the recipients of security provision meaning that women's security interests must receive special attention where they divert from public security interests in general.

Therefore, the GED should be tasked with the following:

- Creating an *equal opportunity* plan for women in the police forces in collaboration with the respective police units as well as the police training centers, including the Police College. This refers to, amongst others, the supervision of recruitment processes as well as developing and continuing to reform and enhance the working conditions for policewomen in a manner that a) they can carry out their tasks without structural obstacles such as, for example, lacking hygienic facilities for women in police stations; and b) that will allow them to continue their work after the birth of a child or to return to police work at a later stage in their lives so that the training of women for the police forces will not be wasted. Such provisions should pertain to, amongst others, maternity leave, making part-time work available, providing child care for female police officers, and providing the possibility to flexibly schedule work shifts to allow for dealing with arising family situations such as the illness of a child.

- Moreover, creating equal opportunities will also require the department to
- Serve as point of contact for policewomen and other female staff within the MoI who wish to complain about discrimination or bring forward suggestions for reform;
 - Conduct research and hold regular meetings with policewomen to gather information and experiences, on the basis of which it will prepare regular reports on the status of women in the police forces, including problems and recommendations for change;
 - Regularly exchange information with women's focal points at unit level (to be established) for the same purpose;
 - Establish and coordinate a mentoring system in which more experienced female police officers provide assistance and advice to new female recruits and those on the lower ranks.
- *Developing training materials for police officers on gender issues in security provision.* In more detail, the department should
 - Make sure that a module on GBV is included in the training of all police officers, male and female and develop and continue updating respective training material;
 - Make sure all police officers are trained on the purpose, goals, and target groups of safe houses and shelter homes in Yemen and develop and continue updating respective training material;
 - Make sure that policewomen are trained as guards for female detention centers and/or women's sections in prisons and develop respective training material;
 - Make sure all policewomen are trained in interviewing techniques to be able to interview women who have become the victim of a crime and develop respective training material.
 - *Coordinating, supporting, and supervising safe houses and shelter homes in Yemen.* In more detail, the department should
 - Build a network of safe houses and shelter homes in all governorates of Yemen and make sure these are supplied with adequate funding;
 - Develop and supervise the implementation of guidelines, standards, and norms for safe houses and shelter homes in Yemen in regard to operational planning, services delivery, health and security issues, the general treatment of beneficiary women and girls, as well as follow-ups with former beneficiaries;
 - Develop and offer capacity-building training for existing and future safe houses and shelter homes staff;

- Coordinate with other Ministries involved in the provision of services to beneficiary women and girls, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor;
- Cooperate with the police, and particularly police women, as well as the Yemeni Women's Union in providing information about the role and purpose of such homes, their target groups, as well as contact details;
- Cooperate with prison staff, particularly that of women's prisons or women's sections in prisons, in providing information about the role and purpose of such homes, their target groups, as well as contact details;
- Cooperate with journalists and civil society in order to raise awareness in society about the concept and goals of safe houses and shelter homes in Yemen.
- *Reforming and supervising the detention of female prisoners as well as all other punishment measures in Yemen.* In more detail, the department should
 - Make sure that female prisoners are guarded only by female guards;
 - Make sure that detention facilities meet the requirements of the inmates in regard to hygiene, nutrition, education, access to information, access to visitors, childcare etc.;
 - Make sure that women who have not yet been sentenced are not detained together with women who have;
 - Institutionalize effective complaint procedures for both male and female detention centers that allow prisoners to address abuse by prison guards. More details on such procedures in the report upon which this brief is based;
 - Cooperate with journalists and civil society in monitoring the standards in detention centers for women.
- *Cooperating with journalists and civil society in general in covering security issues relating to women and girls in society, raising awareness in society, and receiving information on specific security concerns in relation to women and girls.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT YPC

The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), with its unparalleled experience and expertise, sets the highest professional standards for public opinion, market, and social science research and analysis. At the forefront of social science research, YPC partners with local and international organizations to research and advise on Yemen's most pressing issues.

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These suggestions mean, of course, that the planned department needs to be organized, staffed, and funded in such a manner that it can adequately carry out its activities. Particularly the head of the department ought to be given actual powers within the Ministry so as to avoid the department's efforts being sidelined. For example, the head of the department ought to be able to impose a veto on certain processes that pertain to recruitment, training, or structural change should gender considerations not be adequately taken into account or should they be outright discriminatory. Because of its importance for the MoI's future self-positioning in regard to human rights issues, the head of this department should always be Deputy Inspector General.

The above results in the following tentative structure of the GED:

